

HB0572 - SUPPORT
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HB0572—Climate Crimes Accountability Act

House Judiciary Committee
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Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is William Mascioli. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I raised my children here. Retired now, I worked for 35 years as an attorney for the federal government protecting the collective-bargaining rights of workers under the National Labor Relations Act, an edifice of rights built on the foundation of “concerted activity for mutual aid and protection.” I was dedicated to that work because that notion of mutual aid and protection is deeply personal for me. I have tried to conduct my life guided by principles of compassion, empathy, and recognition that we are all tied together by threads of obligation and responsibility – to each other as humans, to future generations, and to the natural world that sustains us. For decades now, I have lived with growing anxiety and despair over our reckless and irresponsible failure to deal with the ongoing climate crisis with anything approaching adequacy.

The fossil fuel industry has done all that it can to deter and deflect effective action to reduce global warming¹, much as the tobacco industry notoriously covered up the dangers of smoking. Unlike the tobacco industry, though, the fossil fuel industry has successfully evaded accountability at every turn. I urge a favorable report on HB0572 as a necessary step toward holding major fossil fuel corporations and their subsidiaries accountable for any tortious or otherwise unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change. The bill empowers our Attorney General to investigate, commence, and prosecute or defend any civil or criminal suit that holds such entities accountable, and establishes a Climate Crimes Accountability Fund to pay for programs that prevent, mitigate, or repair harms caused by climate change.

It would be foolish and irresponsible to our fellow citizens and our descendants to deprive Maryland of this avenue to pursue justice and protect the health and safety of the State’s citizens and environment. I therefore urge a favorable report on HB0572.

¹ See Cook, J., Supran, G., Lewandowsky, S., Oreskes, N., & Maibach, E. (2019). *America Misled: How the fossil fuel industry deliberately misled Americans about climate change*. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. Available at <https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/america-misled>.